

Is it worth it? I really think it is. If you're a poor senior, the Government will pay most of your drugs. We really don't want to be a society where seniors have to choose between food and medicine. It's worth it even if you're not in that income category because you'll save money.

And saving money is good after you retire. It'll help you. If you're a son or a daughter—again, I repeat—do your duty. It will give you peace of mind to know that your mom or dad are taken care of.

We worked hard to get this bill passed. It's a good piece of legislation. It's one of those times where people are going to be able to say, "Well, the Government actually did a good thing for us."

And so I want to thank you all for coming. I particularly want to thank our panelists. I want to thank my fellow citizens who've come. I particularly want to, again, thank the vets—veterans who are here. Bob, thanks for your hospitality. Thank you for paying attention.

May God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:07 p.m. in the Richard J. Ernst Community Center at Northern Virginia Community College.

Remarks at the Small Business Week Conference

April 13, 2006

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. So I see Eric behind the stage. I said, "Congratulations on being the Small Business Owner of the Year." And he said, "You know, if I thought part of the prize was having to stand in front of those cameras and introduce you, I might not have accepted it." [Laughter] But I appreciate your introduction, Eric. Thanks.

I want to thank you all for allowing me to come by to celebrate the Small Business Week with you. You know, I'm an MBA, but I got to tell you, the most instructive part of my understanding about how the economy works—when I was trying to meet a payroll. The entrepreneurs of this country not only create and run their own businesses, they work hard. But I've learned that it's a calling to run your own business. I mean, there's

something special about somebody who stands up and says, "I got a dream; I got a hope."

The great thing about the entrepreneur in the small-business sector of our economy is that you provide great steam and strength to the growth of our economy. And today I want to talk to you about why the small-business owner is at the cornerstone of our progrowth economic policies and what we intend to do to make sure that the environment for taking risk is strong and viable here in this country.

Before I do, I want to say thanks to Eric's wife as well, for being here. I appreciate my friend Hector Barreto. He's the Administrator of the SBA. Thank you for being here, Hector. Thanks for serving. I also had the honor of congratulating Andrew Field, who is the founder and president of printingforless.com, Livingston, Montana, for being the runner-up; as well as Barbara and Leroy Shatto, owners of Shatto Milk Company, Osborn, Missouri, for also being the runner-up to the SBA Small Business Persons of the Year.

This economy of ours is good. It's strong. It's a good time to be a small-business owner in America. After all, we grew at a healthy rate of 3.5 percent last year. That's the fastest rate of any major industrialized economy. We've now had 17 straight quarters of economic expansion. Real after-tax income has grown by more than 8 percent since 2001. After-tax means money in your pocket, that's what that means. That means, on average, Americans have an income that is \$2,100 higher this year than it was the beginning of 2001—that's after adjusting for inflation.

More Americans own a home today than ever before in history; more minorities own a home today than ever before in history. And that's positive news for this economy. Consumer confidence is at its highest point in nearly 4 years. Productivity is high, and it's on the rise. And that's good news for American entrepreneurs and really good news for American workers. Productivity increases improves the lives of our fellow citizens over time. Manufacturing activity is strong. This economy is going well, and the small-business owner is leading the way.

It's really important for our country to understand this fact: Small businesses are vital for our workers. Small businesses create two out of every three new jobs, and they account for nearly half of the country's overall employment. Think about that. Two out of every three new jobs are created by the entrepreneur. That's why it makes sense to have the small business at the cornerstone of a progrowth economic policy.

Recently, our economic reports showed that this economy added 211,000 jobs in the month of March. Over the last 2½ years, we've added 5.1 million new jobs. This is the 31st straight month that the American economy has added jobs. The national unemployment rate is down to 4.7 percent. That's lower than the average rate of the past four decades. When small businesses grow, the American economy benefits.

Small businesses are vital for our communities. You sponsor Little League teams, and you donate to local charities and community drives, and you serve on your school boards and hospital boards and different community groups. Without our small businesses and entrepreneurs, our communities would be less vibrant and less welcoming. I appreciate the fact that you're close to your customers. Your hard work and investment is the lifeblood of our cities all across the country.

Small businesses are vital to building a more hopeful future for this country. When you open up a shop or lease a factory or offer a new service, you take a risk. Risk-taking takes vision, and risk-taking takes courage. And it's the risk-takers—are people who help define the vibrancy of an economy.

I thought Ronald Reagan put it best when he said the entrepreneurs are the "explorers of the modern era." Welcome to exploration, and thank you for betting on a brighter future, and thank you for adding optimism into the soul of this country.

Opening a small business is a great opportunity for a lot of folks to realize their dreams. I believe that we should promote an ownership society in America. We want people owning something in this society. Women now own more than one-quarter of the businesses in our country. The number of women-owned businesses is growing strongly. Hispanic Americans are opening their

own businesses, and those businesses are opening at a rate—at three times faster than the national average. And those are positive developments for a society.

It's been said that having your own business means working 80 hours a week so you can avoid working 40 hours a week for somebody else. [*Laughter*] Owning your own business is a great responsibility. But there is a strong reward in being independent. And I hope there's a strong reward in your understanding that you're contributing mightily to this great Nation.

And so how do we continue to help people realize this sense of independence? My philosophy of government is this: Government's role is not to create wealth; the job of the government is to create an environment in which people are willing to take risk, in which entrepreneurship flourishes. And that's a strategy I've been pursuing and I'm going to continue to pursue. And so today I want to talk to you about three broad areas where we can continue to work to make sure this environment is good for the small-business owner. And that includes taxes and spending and health care and expansion of opportunities here and abroad.

First, creating an environment where small businesses can flourish begins with keeping taxes low and spending your money wisely. We've overcome a lot in this economy, and I want to thank you for your hard work in helping us overcome a lot. The history of the past 5 years has—the economic history of the past 5 years has shown this country's capacity to overcome some pretty major hurdles. We've overcome a stock market correction, a recession, a vicious attack on the United States of America. We've overcome war, and we've overcome natural disasters.

I told you what the statistics were about how fast this economy is growing. It's really amazing when you put it in the context of what you've helped us overcome. And I believe one of the reasons we've overcome these hurdles is because we put progrowth economic policies in place, starting with real, substantial tax cuts.

We cut the taxes for everybody who paid taxes. It wasn't one of these tax deals where, you know, "Okay, you're okay; you're not. Therefore, you get tax relief; you don't."

That's—I didn't think that was fair. You might remember, we lowered taxes on families by cutting the rates and by doubling the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. It didn't make much sense to tax marriage. [Laughter] We passed something else that I think makes a lot of sense for the small-business owner and the farmer and the rancher, is that we put the death tax on the way to extinction.

The problem with that is that it comes back to life in 2011. Congress needs to set aside politics and get rid of the death tax, for the sake of our small-business owners. It makes no sense for you to have to pay taxes while you're alive, and then they pay taxes on the same business after you die.

We cut the taxes on the small-business owners. If you want the small-business sector to grow, if you recognize two-thirds of new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes sense to let small businesses keep more of the money they make. After all, when a small-business owner has got more money in his or her treasury, you're likely to expand your business. You talk to some of these business—the folks who won the business award, I said, "How many jobs—how many employees did you have 5 years ago, and how many do you have today?"

You had how many 5 years ago?

Eric Hoover. Twenty-four.

The President. Twenty-four 5 years ago, and over 100 and—

Mr. Hoover. —107.

The President. —107. His business expanded. That's what we want. Two-thirds of new jobs are created by small-business owners, and when small-business owners have more money in their treasuries, they're likely to expand. I also recognize that many small-business owners are either a sole proprietorship or—a small business is a sole proprietorship, or a subchapter S corporation, or a limited partnership, which means that the principals pay tax—the business pays tax at the individual income tax level. So when we reduce taxes on individuals, we are really reducing taxes on small businesses as well.

There's a healthy debate in this town about cutting taxes; I understand that. And some in this town said cutting taxes would ruin the economy. Some of them said, "If you cut

taxes, this economy is going to look like the Great Depression." As a matter of fact, on the day when the Republicans in the House and the Senate were finalizing the 2003 tax cuts, one of the Democrat leaders said these tax cuts would do nothing to create jobs. That person was wrong 5.1 million times over in the last 2½ years.

And there's an ongoing debate about the taxes. Some in Washington proposed that we raise your taxes, either by repealing the tax cuts or letting them all expire. These are the same folks who said, "If you keep your own money, that would be irresponsible and reckless policy." Those folks were wrong then, and they're wrong now. To keep the small-business sector strong and creating jobs, Congress needs to make the tax relief permanent.

And they can start when they get back by sending me a bill that extends the tax cuts we delivered on dividends and capital gains, so that our businesses and investors can plan with confidence. Uncertainty in the Tax Code makes it hard for investors to plan. Uncertainty in the Tax Code makes it hard for small-business owners to plan. We need certainty in this Tax Code, and Congress needs to make those tax cuts permanent.

Oh, I know you'll hear the argument that says, "Well, we got to raise your taxes in order to balance the budget." That's not the way Washington, DC, works. I've been here long enough to tell you, it's not going to work that way. What will end up happening is, they're going to raise your taxes, and then they're going to figure out new ways to spend your money. The best way to balance this budget, the best way to cut the deficit in half by 2009, is to keep the progrowth economic policies in place and be wise about how we spend your money.

And that starts with setting priorities. I think you know something about setting priorities. When you run your business, you got to set priorities, and we got to set them here in Washington. So long as we've got people in harm's way, so long as we've got men and women in our uniform in a time of war, the number one priority of this Government is to make sure they got all what it takes to be victorious in the war on terror.

We're making progress on what's called discretionary spending. The last two budgets I've submitted has actually cut discretionary spending, except that which is applied for our military and homeland defense. And that required hard work by the Congress. But it's not enough, in order to get this deficit cut in half by 2009 and keep this economy growing. One way Congress can help is to pass the line-item veto. It's an important tool to help bring fiscal discipline here to Washington, DC.

And the idea has received bipartisan support. I was very pleased that my opponent in the 2004 campaign, Senator John Kerry, came down to the White House the other day and expressed his support for a line-item veto. He campaigned on a line-item veto, and now he's supporting the administration with a line-item veto. And other Democrats and Republicans must give the President the chance to trim out that part of the budget which does not meet our priorities. And I hope Congress passes this important piece of legislation quickly as a sign of reform.

In the long-term, though, the biggest challenge facing our—facing the budgets of the United States are those inherent in mandatory programs. And that would be Social Security and Medicare. We got a problem in these programs because there's a lot of people just like me getting ready to retire. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, my retirement age—my eligibility age for Social Security just happens to come in 2008. [Laughter] I hate to admit, I'm turning 60 this year. I can see some other folks out there fixing to turn 60 this year as well. [Laughter] And there's a lot of us. There's a lot of baby boomers who are living longer and are promised more benefits than the previous generation. And the system can't be sustained. It's just not going to work.

And there's an unfunded liability problem that faces this generation today, and it's going to be especially acute for a generation coming up. And Congress needs to take my offer to sit down at the table in good faith. We need people from both political parties putting their ideas on the table about how we can deal with Social Security and Medicare, how we can do our job. I tell people, the job of a President is to confront problems

and not to pass them on to future Presidents and future Congresses. And that's what the Congress ought to do—set aside needless politics and do what's right for the American people. And I'm going to work with them to do so.

To create an environment where small businesses flourish means that health care has got to be affordable and available, is a health care system that needs to make sure that we've got high-quality care at reasonable prices for our people. The Federal Government has made a strong commitment to the elderly, and we're going to keep that commitment. And by the way, if you've got a mother or father who's eligible for Medicare, you need to make sure he or she sees the new—the benefits of this new drug—prescription drug coverage we've got. This is a good deal for the American seniors. And we're working hard to make sure that American seniors realize that there is a fine opportunity for them to improve their lot in life.

Listen, I couldn't stand the thought of seniors having to choose between an electricity bill and pharmaceuticals. That didn't make any sense in our country. And if you're a low-income senior listening today, you ought to make sure you get ahold of a representative from Medicare or a friend or a churchmate, or call 1-800-MEDICARE, or get your son or daughter to get on medicare.gov and find out the benefits inherent in this program. If you're one-third of the seniors who are income-qualified, the Federal Government is going to pay 95 percent or more of your prescription drug benefits.

And the Federal Government can keep its commitment to the poor as well, by making sure Medicaid works well and by continuing to expand community health centers. It makes sense for the taxpayers to help us build community health centers for the poor and the indigent, to take the pressure off of our emergency rooms in America's hospitals—a place where people can get reasonable primary care.

But for the rest of us, we have got to make sure that the system is affordable and available without empowering the Federal Government to make all the decisions for the businessowners and the consumers and the

providers. There's a debate here in Washington, DC, about who knows what to do best about health care. And there's some folks who said, "The Federal Government can handle it all," and I'm not one of them. I believe the best health care system has the patient and the doctor central to the decisionmaking of this important industry. And I also understand that small businesses are hit hard by health care costs. As a matter of fact, many of the working uninsured work for small businesses, because small businesses cannot afford the health care they want to provide for their employees.

And so here are some ideas to help. One, I think it's important to, as I said, make sure the patient and the doctor are central to the health care systems. And therefore, I believe strongly in what's called health savings accounts. And I think it's very important for the small-business owners to pay attention to the benefits of a health savings account for your particular company.

Health savings accounts stand in contrast to the traditional insurance system. The traditional insurance system, as you know, the employer provides their employee with a plan that they pay for the deductible and a small copayment, and somebody else pays the bills. It's a third-party payer system. And when somebody else pays the bills, you really don't care about the cost, unless you're having to pay for the rising premium.

Here's the way health savings accounts work: It says that, on the one hand, you buy catastrophic insurance coverage at a low price, and on the other hand, there is a cash account that covers the deductible of the catastrophic plan, that's contributed into the plan by employer, employee, or combination of both, tax-free. And that's—you use that to pay for your ordinary medical expenses, until the catastrophic plan kicks in. If you don't spend the money, the interest on that money is tax-free, and you roll it over to the next year that you—in which you can contribute again.

It turns out that the combination of the contribution—the cash contribution into the tax-free health savings account, plus the premium on the insurance plan, is generally less than third-party payer systems. Small businesses can save money under this plan.

The plan also empowers the employee to make rational decisions about health care. The more the consumer is involved in the quality and price of a product, the more likely it is the product is not going to be increasing at double-digits rates. Consumer involvement is an important aspect of quality health care at affordable prices.

Over the past few years, the number of Americans who own health savings account has gone from 1 million to 3 million. More than a third of those who have chosen HSAs were previously uninsured. You know, if you're a young person feeling relatively healthy, you may decide, "I don't want any health insurance; I'm never going to get sick." You might remember those days. *[Laughter]* Doesn't it make sense to be able to set aside money on a tax-free basis—that you earn tax-free to cover future medical costs? Health savings accounts do just that. Forty percent of those who own an HSA have family incomes below \$50,000 a year. It's a really good idea, and I strongly urge you to look into them.

In Connecticut earlier this month, I met a small-business guy who runs a retirement community. He said a third of his employees now have HSAs—health savings accounts. It's given them good coverage, and it saved the company \$78,000 on health premiums. Health savings accounts make a lot of sense, and we've got to make them stronger, not weaker here in Washington, DC.

One obstacle to expanding health savings accounts is the Federal Tax Code. Under current law, employers and employees pay no income tax or payroll tax on any health insurance provided through the workplace. But if you buy insurance on your own, you don't get the same tax break. And that means that the self-employed or the unemployed or workers at companies that don't provide health insurance are at a great disadvantage. So Congress needs to end discrimination in the Tax Code and give Americans who buy HSA policies on their own the same tax breaks that those who get their health insurance from their employers.

Another problem with this Tax Code is that it limits the amount you can contribute to your HSA tax-free. The limit is usually tied to your deductible. Buy a high-deductible

catastrophic plan, and you can contribute up to the deductible, by current law. But sometimes your out-of-pocket expenses are greater than your deductible. It's especially important for those with chronic illnesses. They often have expenses that go well beyond their deductibles. And so we need to fix the Tax Code by raising the cap on the amount of money you can put into your HSA tax-free. Raising this cap is going to help Americans cover all their out-of-pocket expenses. And equally important, raising this cap will help make sure this product is attractive to people. We want people being able to have different options in the marketplace. We want people directly involved in the decisionmaking of their health care.

And by the way, I got another idea for small businesses, and that is business—small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so they can buy insurance at the same discount big companies get. So I'm a strong believer in health—association health plans.

Congress needs to act on this idea—it's a good idea for small businesses. I mean, if people want the small-business sector to flourish, then they ought to help small businesses be able to afford health care. This is a rational idea. It makes a lot of sense. The House has done its part, and now the United States Senate needs to do its part as well.

Here's another idea to make sure health care is affordable and available. We got too many junk lawsuits running dogs out of business and running up the cost of your medicine. When it looks like you might get sued, if you're a doctor, then you practice what's called defensive medicine. In other words, you prescribe more than you should, more procedures than necessary, because you're constantly thinking about how to make sure you can make your case in front of a jury. These frivolous lawsuits, this plethora of lawsuits, is running up the cost of health care for you. It's not only causing your premiums to go up, but it's causing the cost of medicine to go up, as doctors try to protect themselves against a lawsuit.

And it affects the Federal budget, by the way. As you know, we've got a lot of health care here in Washington. We've got a Medicare system and a Medicaid system and a vet-

erans system. It is anticipated—it is estimated that we spend \$28 billion extra a year because of the defensive practice of medicine. And that's why I believe this issue is a Federal problem that requires a Federal response, and the United States Congress needs to pass medical liability reform this year.

A couple of other points I want to make on health care. In other words, we've got a comprehensive strategy that says, "We've got a better vision than having the Federal Government make all the decisions for you." It's a vision that says, "We're going to take care of the elderly, and we're going to help the poor." But it's also a vision that says, "We trust consumers, and we want the marketplace to function, and we want there to be reasonable policy to help deal with the rising cost of health care."

One such way is to promote transparency, so patients know exactly what their options are. When you really think about it, the health care field is not a very transparent place when it comes to price and quality. I mean, how many of you really ever shopped for health care? How many of you have ever actually gotten on the Internet and tried to compare price before you make a health care decision? Not many, because, one, the system has somebody else paying the bills for you, and, two, there's not a lot of transparency. So this Government is going to continue to work with folks in the health care field to make sure that price and quality are available to you as a consumer. It's amazing what happens when people have information at their fingertips before they make decisions.

And another way to help wring out the costs in health care is to help encourage and expand the health care industry to adopt information technology as an integral part of its industry. Many of you have done that. Many of you have used the—information technology to help enhance the productivity of your business. That's generally not the case in health care. I mean, think about the guy who goes to the hospital, and he's carrying the file with him where all the pages are handwritten. It's kind of a problem in health care, since most doctors can't write legibly to begin with. *[Laughter]*

And so I believe we ought to work to make sure we have electronic health records for each individual here in America that, one, protects your safety, but, two, carries your history with you so that we help wring out additional costs in medicine and, at the same time, reduce errors. So there's a comprehensive vision to make sure health care is available and affordable, particularly for our small-business owners.

I want to talk about something else, and that is how to make sure that small businesses can expand here at home and abroad. First at home: The Small Business Administration is working hard to make it easier for people to start up companies. We understand that sometimes people have got a good idea, but they're not sure how to get something started. They're a little worried about the startup. And so we've doubled the number of small-business loans out of the SBA since I came to office. And we've increased the number of loans to minority entrepreneurs by 175 percent. I told Hector I want people from all walks of life benefiting from Government programs, and he's done his job, and I appreciate that.

Another important fact is this: We've lowered the cost of running the SBA by more than 20 percent. And so we've increased the amount of our loans to the entrepreneurs by 80 percent. By reducing the cost of granting a loan, it makes the loan less expensive for you.

I'm also going to continue working up markets—working to open up markets overseas. I don't know if you realize this, but we're home to 5 percent of the world's population. That means 95 percent of the potential customers live outside of the United States. If you're good at making something or growing something, it seems like you'd want to make sure your customer base is expanded, that you have an opportunity to be able to access those markets.

Today, small-businesses account for about a quarter of this country's exports. I find that to be an encouraging and interesting statistic. The problem is that a lot of small businesses in certain markets find it very difficult to navigate the bureaucracies and paperwork required to sell their good or their service in a particular country. Big businesses have

got staffs of people who can do that; small businesses don't. And therefore, I think it is very important for the American citizen to understand that when we work to expand free and fair trade, in one way, we're helping to make sure the small-business sector of this country remains strong. The easier it is for somebody to sell a product in somebody else's market, the more likely it is people will be able to find opportunity here in the United States of America.

When I took office, we had three free trade agreements; now we've got free trade agreements with 11 countries and 18 more pending. I'm also pushing for an ambitious conclusion to the Doha round of the world trade talks so we can lower barriers and reduce regulations, to make it easier for people to be able to sell in foreign markets. So we need to be confident in our ability to compete. I believe the United States can outcompete anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the rules are fair.

And so one of the places—one country that can show the world that it means to be a trading partner that plays by the rules is China. This coming week, next week, I'm going to meet with President Hu Jintao, and I look forward to welcoming him to the White House. America values China as a trading partner, but we expect China to live up to its commitments. China needs to make itself more transparent. China needs to enforce intellectual property rights. China needs to take additional steps to address the trade imbalance between our countries. And China needs to move to a flexible market-based currency.

This country needs to be confident about the future, and we need to shape the future. And one way we can shape the future is to make sure that we stay on the leading edge of technology and research. And so I've called on Congress to double funding for basic—vital, basic research. I think that's a proper role for the Federal Government, to be involved with helping the basic sciences expand new horizons. Congress needs to make the research and development tax credit a permanent part of the Tax Code to encourage private sector to do its part about making sure this country is technologically advanced and innovative.

And our education system must make sure we set high standards and measure and make sure that we're just not passing kids through the schools that can't read and write. And I'm calling on Congress to encourage school districts to have a special emphasis on math and science. We want our children to be educated so they can lead the world. We want them educated with the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

I also recognize that in order for us to be competitive, we've got to get off oil. I said in my State of the Union that the United States has a problem—we're addicted to oil. Now, I know you probably thought that was kind of weird for a Texan to say. *[Laughter]* But I'm telling you, we've got an economic security problem because of our reliance upon fossil fuels, and we've got a national security problem because of our reliance on fossil fuels.

And I'm looking forward to working with Congress when they get back, to make sure we invest wisely in new technologies that will encourage additional use of ethanol to power our automobiles; new technologies that will enable us to develop plug-in batteries so that hybrid vehicles are able to drive the first 40 miles on electricity, without using any gasoline; new technologies that will encourage solar energy; and technologies that will enable us to develop a safe nuclear power industry. We're spending a lot of money right now on clean coal technologies. What I'm telling you is, we've got a comprehensive agenda and plan to take this country into a different era when it comes to consuming energy, an era that will make us less dependent on foreign sources of oil, enable us to be wise stewards of the environment.

I want to talk to you about another issue to make sure this country remains competitive, and that's immigration. This is a highly emotional issue; it's a vitally important issue. It's an issue that we need to conduct a debate on in a way that is worthy of this country's best traditions. We are a land of immigrants. Any immigration reform has got to improve the ability to secure our borders and enforce our laws. We are a nation of laws. I don't know if you realize this, but since 2001, we have turned back 6 million folks trying to come into this country illegally. There are

a lot of people working hard down on our borders, and we're going to continue to modernize the borders to enable them to do—better do their jobs. But any effective immigration reform must include a temporary-worker program that includes a legal way to match willing foreign workers with willing American employers to fill the jobs Americans will not do.

This immigration program should not provide automatic citizenship or amnesty. It should provide a chance for people to work here legally on a temporary basis. Encouraging people to abide by the law is a necessary part of our country—the history of our country. Recognizing that people are doing jobs here that nobody else will do is important for, perhaps, some of you here in this audience. Making sure there are tamper-proof identification cards so people can't cheat on the system makes sense to me. Treating people with dignity makes sense to me. Making sure the system doesn't force people into the shadows of our society, changing that system for the better—for security and for decency—makes sense to me. And the Congress needs to set aside partisan differences and get a good bill to my desk.

I was encouraged last week when Members of the United States Senate reached a promising bipartisan compromise on comprehensive immigration reform. That was a hopeful sign. Unfortunately, the compromise was blocked by the Senate Democratic Minority Leader. He refused to allow Senators to move forward and vote for amendments to the bill. It was a procedural gimmick that meant he was singlehandedly thwarting the will of the American people and impeding bipartisan efforts to secure this border and make this immigration system of ours more humane and rational. This town has got too much politics to it. It's time to set aside needless partisan politics and focus on what's right for the United States of America.

I appreciate being with people who are the entrepreneurs of this country. The entrepreneurial spirit of America is strong, and I intend to keep it strong. Look, I can't make you take risk; I can't make you dream. It's up to you. But I can keep your taxes low to make it easier for you to realize your dream. We can do something about health

care costs so that you can realize the dream of making sure your employees have got health care coverage. We can open up markets for you. We can make sure the environment is strong, so people continue to realize their dreams.

I love a society in which people are able to pursue their dreams, no matter who they are or where they're from. I think this really speaks to the greatness of the United States of America—a place where a person can start with nothing and end up with something, a place where a small-business owner can grow to be a big-business owner, if that's what he or she desires. A society in which people are able to accomplish their dreams is a whole society and a complete society.

Ours is a remarkable country because of the entrepreneurial spirit of America. And I want to thank you for being a part of this great land of ours. Thanks for what you do. Thanks for expanding the job base. May God bless you and may God continue to bless your families.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:46 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Eric Hoover, president and chief executive officer, Excalibur Machine Co., and his wife, Annette; and President Hu Jintao of China. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Message on the Observance of Easter 2006

April 13, 2006

"He is not here; for He is risen, as He said."

Matthew 28:6

I send greetings to those observing the joyous holiday of Easter. On Easter, Christians around the world join together with family and friends to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the triumph of love over death. This is a season of renewal, a time for giving thanks and praise and for remembering that hope overcomes despair.

Christ's extraordinary sacrifice and compassion continue to inspire people around the world. His promise of new life gives hope and confidence to His followers. His service

and love for His neighbors offer a profound lesson for all people.

During this Easter season, we celebrate God's gifts of freedom and justice. We pray for peace and ask for God's blessings on the brave men and women who wear our Nation's uniform and their families.

Laura and I wish you a Happy Easter.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Proclamation 8001—Thomas Jefferson Day, 2006

April 13, 2006

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Today, we celebrate the birthday of Thomas Jefferson. Few individuals have shaped the course of human events as much as this proud son of Virginia. His achievements are extraordinary: Governor of Virginia, author of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, Secretary of State, third President of the United States, and founder of the University of Virginia. Thomas Jefferson was also a scholar, author, farmer, inventor, and architect. As President, Thomas Jefferson secured the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France, which doubled the size of the United States and extended opportunity and prosperity to many more Americans.

Thomas Jefferson was an eloquent and powerful champion of liberty. He captured the American creed when he wrote in a private letter: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." And in one of the most important public documents in history, Jefferson wrote these words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." The Declaration of Independence has become a cornerstone for those who love freedom and justice.